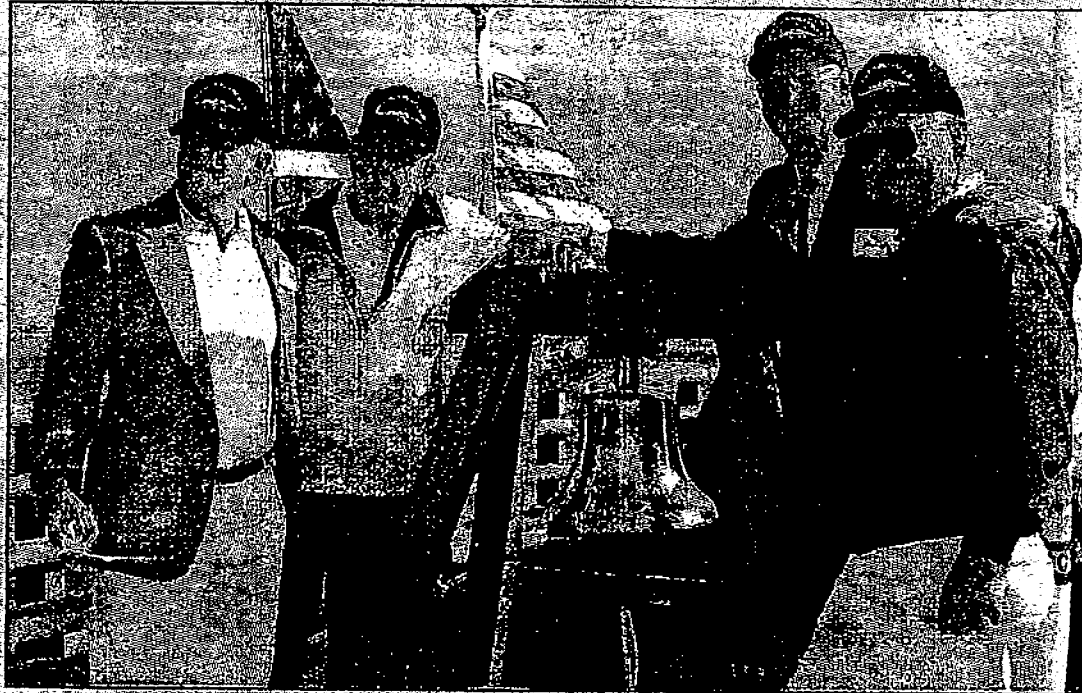


POWDER POINT BRIDGE

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

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HOMEcoming: Dave Calabrese, Gerry Blaydes, Ray Stapleton and Keith Roberts, all veterans of the USS Duxbury Bay, pose for a picture by the ship's bell on the Powder Point Bridge.

Duxbury Bay Reunited

Naval reunion held on Powder Point Bridge

By JUSTIN GRAEBER

For the first time, members of the crew of the USS Duxbury Bay got to see the water their ship was named for.

The crew of the USS Duxbury Bay, a light seaplane tender that was commissioned

in 1994 and remained on active duty until 1966, held their reunion in Duxbury last week. For most of the crew members, it was their first time seeing Duxbury — which until last Thursday had been nothing more to them than a map on the wall of the ship.

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The crew of the USS Duxbury pose for a picture with the honor guard from the USS Constitution.

USS Duxbury Holds Reunion

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"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for us," said Ray Stapleton. Stapleton served two tours on the Duxbury Bay, from 1959-1966.

The history of the Duxbury Bay is short but storied. The ship was built for World War II and saw combat against the Japanese in Okinawa. After the war, it patrolled the Eastern coast of the United States from Latin America to Nova Scotia. The ship was stationed in Guantanamo Bay during the Cuban Missile Crisis,

and eventually wound up in the Persian Gulf.

"The name has been spread around the world," said Stapleton. "We were the flagship for the Commander of the Middle East Force."

Although the ship's last years were focused on diplomatic duties, as the Navy had phased out the use of seaplanes, Stapleton and his mates felt the mission was no less important than that of their more combat-ready cousins.

"We represented the US in the Middle East at a time where there could have been

conflict," he said. "Hopefully, the USS Duxbury flying the flag helped to keep peace there."

After the ship was decommissioned in 1966, the ship's bell was sent to Duxbury, where it remains in the Town Hall atrium. On Thursday, the bell was to be rung one last time, as the surviving crew members tossed a wreath into the bay in remembrance of their shipmates who have died.